

the window with a bowl on her lap, a fish bowl in which two goldfish swam endlessly about in monotonous patterns. but this new development didn't interest anyone: there was no mystery as to whether the fish were alive or not, and they certainly would not be a valuable source of nutrition and energy for our boys doing battle with an enemy who now seemed to be advancing on every side of us. it would take zillions of goldfish, we figured, to feed the troops; killing these two would be futile. in time people forgot about the woman with the unruly red hair, sitting there in the window with the fish bowl in her lap. some even stopped walking past the old house on the corner. most considered her insane. following her death, the goldfish grew old and died too. in the best tradition of the town they were bronzed, these goldfish, and they were sold to the enemy as good luck charms.

MY PRIZE POSSESSION

i take a skull of a dog and hang it up over the fireplace, right in the center, and there is nothing on the mantelpiece except a deck of cards which hasn't been used for over half a year, at least. there's nothing on the walls either, since the chalky white appeals to me more than any of the paintings i own. the rest of the farmhouse is the same way. the walls are empty and white and there is not much furniture, and even in the cabinets there are only a few dishes and a can of beans and a bottle with hardly any olive oil left in it. in the bedroom where i sleep there is a futon on the floor, which georgette's brother gave us to use at one time as an extra bed, and when she left she didn't bother taking it with her. now it is my closest friend. the bedroom across the hallway has a laundry bag in it, with some roots hanging on the one wall, which i found one day years ago down by the stream when i was working at the motel, for those five years after my marriage to eileen ended. to say that i like to keep things simple is no big revelation. and it's easy to do here too, being that there is so much room, so many rooms, rooms on the first floor and then more rooms on the second floor. a lot of rooms for one guy. the rare visitor is always jealous. when i moved here i wasn't alone, i was with g, but now circumstances have done what they've always done: they've changed, and the change has left me with many rooms.

the skull of the dog i am very
proud of. it is my prize possession.

i don't ask it any questions,
and it doesn't ask me any.
i'll keep it with me as i grow old.

it will keep me company.

i admire the teeth

it has left.

— Ronald Baatz

Mt. Tremper NY

SNOWBALL

i drive home from work
mid february
ten thousand essays graded
in ten years of teaching
thirty or forty thousand to go
if i'm lucky
a lean gray haired man stops his walk
beside the retaining wall
beneath the luxury houses
behind the wintering driving range
where the assistant superintendent lives
with her pink cadillac
to scoop a snowball
i speed off
maybe he wants
to throw it at my chevvie
which is as old as my dog
who is older than my mother
or will he wait for a truck
with an open window
we used to snowbomb busses
when we were new york kids
maybe a cop car
sending them searching
white streets for juvenile delinquents
no telling what may happen
when youth strikes old hearts

GENGHIS KHAN

ghenghis khan
we secretly named him
the anonymous infamous cook
of yankee kitchen restaurant